

"What is Tippoo doing, Dick?"

"Well, as far as I can see, uncle, he is preparing for war again. He is strengthening all his forts, building fresh defences to Seringapatam, and drilling numbers of fresh troops."

"The English general made a great mistake in not finishing with him when he was there. We ought to have taken the city, sent Tippoo down a prisoner to Madras, and there tried him for the murder of scores of Englishmen, and hung him over the ramparts. We shall have all our work to do over again in another four or five years. However, it will not be such a difficult business as it was last time, now that we have the passes in our hands."

"There is no doubt, uncle, that a considerable part of the population will be heartily glad when Tippoo's power is at an end. You see, he and Hyder were both usurpers, and had no more right to the throne than you had."

"Quite so, Dick, and that makes our letting him off, when we could have taken the capital easily, all the more foolish. If he had been the lawful ruler of Mysore, it might not have been good policy to push him too hard, for he would have had sympathy from all the native princes of India. But as being only the son of an adventurer who had deposed and ill-treated the lawful ruler of Mysore, it would seem to them but a mere act of justice if the English had dethroned him and punished him—provided, of course, they put a native prince on the throne, and did not annex all his dominions."

"It has all got to come some day. I can see that in time the English will be the rulers of all India, but at present they are not strong enough to face a general coalition of the native states against them, and any very high-handed action in Mysore might well alarm the native princes throughout India into laying aside their quarrels with each other, and combining in an attempt to drive them out."

Just as they had finished their meal Mrs. Holland entered.

"The poor child is asleep," she said. "She wanted to

talk at first, and to tell me how grateful she was to you, Dick, but of course I insisted on her being quiet, and said that she should tell me all about it in the morning. She ate a few mouthfuls of the rice, and not long after she lay down she fell asleep. I have left Sundra sitting there, in case she should wake up again, but I don't think it is likely that she will do so. Now, Dick, you must tell us all about it."

Dick was not a great hand at writing letters, so he had not entered with any fulness into the details of what he was doing, the principal point being to let his mother know that he was alive and well.

"Before he begins," the Rajah said, "I will send for Rajbullub and Surajah. Master Dick is rather fond of cutting his stories short, and we must have Surajah here to fill up details."

Surajah and his father soon appeared. The former was warmly greeted by the Rajah, and when they had seated themselves on a divan, Dick proceeded to tell the story. He was not interrupted until he came to the incident of the killing of the tiger, and here Surajah was called upon to supplement the story, which he did, doing full credit to the quickness with which Dick had, without a moment's loss of time, cut the netting and ascended to the window. When Dick came to the incident of the ladies of the harem presenting them, in Tippoo's presence, with the two caskets, Mrs. Holland broke in,—

"You did not say anything about that in your letter, Dick. Let me see your casket. Where is it?"

"It is in one of the saddle-bags," Dick said.

"They are in my room," Rajbullub corrected. "Surajah brought them up at once."

"Then he had better get them," the Rajah said. "What do they contain, Dick?" he asked, as Surajah left the room.

"All sorts of things—necklaces and rings. Some of them are stones, as if they had been taken out of their settings."



Pertaub said they had done this because they thought perhaps that Tippoo would not allow the jewels they had worn to be sold, or worn by any one else."

"Then I should think that they must be valuable," the ranee said.

"Pertaub said they were worth a good deal, but I don't know whether he really knew about the cost of precious stones. Some of the things were of small value, being, I suppose, the trinkets of the slave-girls. All gave something, and there is a little cross there that belonged to Annie; it has her initials on it, and she had it on her neck when she was captured. It was the thing she valued most, and therefore she gave it. I don't suppose she had anything else, except the usual trinkets she would wear, when she went out on special occasions with the ladies of the harem. I thought it would be useful to us, to prove who she was."

Surajah now returned with the caskets.

"You had better look at Surajah's first," Dick said. "I don't know anything about it, but it looks as if mine were the more valuable. I wanted Surajah to put them all together, and divide fairly, but he would not."

"My son was perfectly right," Rajbullub said. "If it had not been for the young lord, the deed would never have been done at all. Surajah aided in killing the tiger, but that was nothing more than he has done on the hills here. It is to you the merit is entirely due. The purse that the Sultan gave my son was in itself an ample reward for the share he took in it. Now, Surajah, open your casket; the ladies are waiting to see the contents."

The whole of the little packets, some fifty in number, were opened and examined, many of them eliciting exclamations of admiration from the ranee and Mrs. Holland.

"There is no doubt that many of them are worth a good deal of money," the Rajah said. "It is certain that Tippoo's treasuries are full of the spoils he has carried off from the

states he has overrun, and the ladies of the harem, no doubt, possess a store of the jewels, and could afford to be liberal to those whom they considered had saved their lives. Those seven which you put together as the best must alone be worth a large sum. I should think that the total value of the whole cannot be less than forty or fifty thousand rupees, so that if those in your casket are handsomer than these, Dick, they must be valuable indeed."

Dick's casket was next examined.

"Some of these stones are magnificent, Dick. Those three great diamonds could only be valued by a jeweller accustomed to such things, for their value depends upon their being of good lustre, and free from all flaws; but according to my judgment, I should say that at the very least they must be worth ten thousand rupees each. That pearl necklace is worth at least as much; those rubies are superb. I should say, lad, that the value of the whole cannot be less than fifteen thousand pounds. The harem must be rich in jewels indeed to be able to make such gifts. Not that I am surprised at that. Tippoo had all the jewels belonging to the lawful rulers of Mysore. He has captured all those of Coorg, Travancore, and the other states on the Malabar coast. He and his father have looted all the Carnatic from Cape Comorin to the north of Madras. He has captured many of the Nizam's cities, and several Mahratta provinces.

"In fact, he has accumulated at Seringapatam the spoils of the whole of southern India, and those of the Hindoo portion of his own people. The value of the jewels alone must be millions of pounds, and as he himself, as they say, dresses simply, and only wears one or two gems of immense value, he may well have bestowed large quantities upon his harem, especially as these would be, in fact, only loans, as at the death of their wearers they would revert to him, or, indeed, could be reclaimed at any moment in a freak of bad temper. I have no doubt they had to ask his permission to give you the presents,



and as you, at the moment, were in high favour with him, I daresay he suffered them to give what they chose, without inquiring at all into their value. The gold he gave you was simply to procure your outfits, and he left it to the harem to reward you as they chose for the service you had rendered.

“Well, Dick, I congratulate you heartily. It places your future beyond doubt, and leaves you free to choose any mode of life that you may prefer. I congratulate you too, Margaret, on the lad’s good fortune, which he has well deserved by his conduct. See this, my sons: here you have a proof of the advantages of the training your cousin has had; the quickness and coolness he has acquired by it enabled him to make his way down through the fort at the top of the pass, and to defend the ruined hut against fifty enemies. Now it has enabled him to seize the opportunity opened by the attack of the tiger on Tippoo’s harem, thereby gaining the Sultan’s favour, his appointment to the rank of colonel in the Mysore army, a post in his Palace, and this magnificent collection of gems. Without that quickness and decision, his courage alone would have done little for him. We in India have courage; but it is because our princes and nobles are brought up in indolence and luxury that the English, though but a handful in point of numbers, have become masters of such wide territories. Surajah is as brave as Dick, but he would be the first to tell you that it is to Dick he owes it that, on their first excursion together, he escaped with his life, and that in this last adventure he attained rank and position, and has returned with these valuable gifts.”

“It is indeed, my lord,” Surajah said. “The young lord has been my leader, and I have tried to carry out his orders. Alone I could never have got through the gate in the fort, and should no more have thought of going to the assistance of the ladies of the Sultan’s harem than did any other of the thousands of men who were there looking on.”

“So you see, boys,” the Rajah went on, “that though when

he came out here your cousin was able neither to shoot nor to ride, and can neither shoot nor ride as well now as can tens of thousands of natives, he has acquired from his training in rough exercises qualities of infinitely greater value than these accomplishments; and I do hope that his example will stir you up to take much greater interest than, in spite of my advice, you have hitherto done in active sports and exercises. Your grandmother was an Englishwoman, and I want to see that, with the white blood in your veins, you have some of the vigour and energy of Englishmen.”

It was some days before Annie Mansfield left her room. For the first two she had been completely prostrated; after that she rapidly gained strength; but Mrs. Holland thought it best to insist upon her remaining perfectly quiet until she had quite recovered. Either she or the ranee were constantly with her, so that when, at the end of a week, she made her first appearance at the breakfast table, she was already at home with three of the party. Before long her shyness completely wore off, and she seemed to have become really a member of the family. Mrs. Holland had altered two of her own dresses to fit her, but she preferred, for a time, to dress in Indian costume, to which she was accustomed, and which was indeed much better suited to the climate than the more closely fitting European dress. Mrs. Holland, however, bargained that she should of an evening wear the frocks she had made for her.

“You must get accustomed to them, my dear, so that when you find your own people you will not be stiff and awkward, as you certainly will be when you dress in English fashion for the first time.”

The day after his arrival Dick had written to the military secretary of the governor of Madras, with whom he was well acquainted, to tell him that, having gone up in disguise to Seringapatam to endeavour to ascertain the fate of his father, he had discovered a young English girl detained as a slave in Tippoo’s harem, and that he had enabled her to effect



her escape, and had placed her in the charge of his mother. He then repeated the account Annie had given of her capture, and asked if the circumstances could be identified, and if the officer of the name of Mansfield concerned in it was still alive, and if so, was he still in India? Annie was secretly dreading the arrival of the answer. After her life as a slave, her present existence seemed to her so perfectly happy that she shrank from the idea of any fresh change. She had no memory whatever of her parents, and had already a very strong affection for Mrs. Holland.

She liked the ranee very much also, and the absence of all state and ceremony in the household of the Rajah was to her delightful. She was already on good terms with the boys, and as to Dick, she was always ready to go out with him if he would take her, to run messages for him, or to do anything in her power, and, indeed, watched him anxiously, as if she would discover and forestall his slightest wish.

"One would think, Annie," he said one day, "that you were still a slave, and that I was your master. I don't want you to wait on me, child, as you waited on the ladies of the harem. However, as I shall be going away in a few days now, it does not matter; but I should grow as lazy as a young rajah if this were to go on long."

"What shall I do when you go away, Dick?"

"Well, I hope that you will set to work hard to learn to read and write, and other things my mother will teach you. You would not like, when you find your own people, to be regarded by girls of your own age as an ignorant little savage; and I want you to set to and make up for lost time, so that, if you are still here when I come back, I shall find you have made wonderful progress."

"Oh, I do hope I sha'n't be gone before that, Dick!"

"I am afraid you must make up your mind to it, Annie, for there is no saying how long I may be away next time. You see, there is not much chance of my lighting upon another

white slave-girl, and having to bring her down here; and I shall go in for a long, steady search for my father."

"I don't want you to find another slave-girl, Dick," she said earnestly, "not even if it brought you down here again. I should not like that at all."

"Why not, Annie?"

"Oh, you might like her ever so much better than me. I should like you to do all sorts of brave things, Dick, and to save people as you have saved me, but I would rather there was not another girl."

Dick laughed.

"Well, I don't suppose that there is much chance of it. Besides, I can't turn my uncle's palace into a Home for Lost Girls."

Two days before Dick and Surajah started again, the reply from the military secretary arrived. It stated that the time and circumstances pointed out that the place besieged and forced to surrender, eight years before, was Corsepan; and this was indeed rendered a certainty by the fact that the officer in command was Captain Mansfield. He had with him a half-company of Europeans and three companies of Sepoys. On looking through the official papers at the time, he had found Captain Mansfield's report, in which he stated that, on the night after leaving the fort, the troops, which had been reduced to half their original strength, had been attacked by a party either of dacoits or irregular troops. Fearing that some such act of treachery might be attempted, he had told his men to conceal a few cartridges under their clothes when they marched out with empty cartridge-pouches. They had, on arriving at their halting-place, loaded, and, when the dacoits fell upon them, had opened fire. The robbers doubtless expected to find them defenceless, and speedily fled. In the confusion, some of them had penetrated far into the camp, and had carried off the captain's daughter, a child of six years old. When peace was signed with Tippoo, three weeks after-



wards, the commissioners were ordered to make special inquiries as to this child, and to demand her restoration. They reported that Tippoo denied all knowledge of the affair, and neither she nor any of the other girls there were ever given up. The letter went on:—

“There can be no doubt that the young lady you rescued is the child who was carried off, and the initials you speak of on the cross may certainly be taken as proof of her identity. Her father retired from the Service last year with the rank of colonel. I am, of course, ignorant of his address. As you say that Mrs. Holland will gladly continue in charge of her, I would suggest that you should write a letter to Colonel Mansfield, stating the circumstances of the case, and saying that as soon as you are informed of his address the young lady will be sent to England. I will enclose the letter in one to the Board of Directors, briefly stating the circumstances, and requesting them to forward the enclosure to Colonel Mansfield.”

To Annie the letter came as a relief. It would be nearly a year before a letter could be received from her father; until then she would be able to remain in her new home.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### A NARROW ESCAPE

MRS. HOLLAND undertook to write the letter to Annie's father, and did so at very much greater length than Dick would have done, giving him the story of the girl's life at Seringapatam, the circumstances of her meeting Dick, and the story of her escape. She assured him that his daughter was all that he could wish her to be.

“She is of a very affectionate disposition; she is frank, outspoken, and natural—qualities that are wonderful, considering the years she has passed as a slave in the harem. Now that

she has been with us for a fortnight, and has recovered from the fatigue of her flight, and is beginning to feel at home, she has regained her natural spirits after their long repression.

“Personally she is of about the average height, and of a more graceful figure than is usual with girls of her age. The stain has now worn off her face, and I should say she will, as she grows up, be pretty. She is fair rather than dark, has expressive eyes and a nice mouth. Altogether, had I a daughter, I should be well content if she resembled your Annie. I shall, I can assure you, do my best to supply the place of a mother to her until I receive a letter from you, and shall part from her with regret. She is, of course, at present entirely uneducated, but she has already begun to learn with me, and as she is quick and intelligent I hope that before I resign my charge, her deficiencies will be so far repaired that she will be able to pass muster in all ordinary matters.”

“You will be back before I go, won't you, Dick?” Annie said, as she sat by his side on a seat in the garden, on the evening before he was to start.

“I think so,” he said. “We can calculate on your being here ten months anyhow. I have been talking it over with my mother. If it had not been for those jewels I should have given up the search for my father after another six months, because it would have been high time for me to get to work in some profession. I had, indeed, made up my mind to enter the Company's service, for Lord Cornwallis promised me a commission, and my uncle received a letter some time ago from the governor of Madras, saying that on the very strong recommendation of Lord Cornwallis, and his report of my services, he was authorised to grant me one; it was to be dated back to the time I joined Lord Cornwallis, more than two years ago. However, now that I am really made independent of a profession, I shall probably continue my search for a somewhat longer time. But at any rate, I will promise